

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 2

By Rochelle

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend Paul Nixon Curtis for meritorious service during World War II.

WHEREAS, our nation was conceived by individuals who were willing to sacrifice their personal safety and concerns to ensure our individual and collective freedom, and the Volunteer State is especially proud to be the home of so many valiant men and women who have performed above and beyond the call of duty; and

WHEREAS, the generation of young men and women who left their various walks of life to take up arms against fascism and in defense of liberty have rightly been described as "the greatest generation"; and

WHEREAS, many of these young people lost their lives, others received grievous injury and others endured long months or years of captivity in deplorable conditions; and

WHEREAS, when those surviving veterans returned to their native land, many maintained a reticence about their experiences and took up civilian activities and careers as if nothing extraordinary had ever occurred in their lives; and

WHEREAS, Paul Nixon Curtis was a young man from the small Wilson County community of Commerce when World War II broke out; he joined the Army and found himself in

combat under the command of General George Patton in Europe following the D-Day invasion; and

WHEREAS, on February 12, 1945, during the waning days of the war in Europe, he and a fellow soldier were cut off from their unit while bringing in two German prisoners; despite their attempts to hide in a basement, the Americans were discovered and Mr. Curtis was a prisoner of war until April of 1945; and

WHEREAS, during this period, Paul Curtis kept a meticulous record of his captivity in tiny handwriting; following the war the recorded events remained, for the most part, confined to the pages of his diary; and

WHEREAS, in 1999 Mr. Curtis shared his story with Ms. Linda Beth Evins; the diary, which has been transcribed by Mr. Curtis to a more readable form, contains a remarkable account of his experiences; and

WHEREAS, Paul Curtis was wounded during the war, and his German captors removed the bullet without benefit of anesthesia; the German surgeon gave the bullet to Mr. Curtis as a "zouvenir"; and

WHEREAS, following a two week stay in the hospital, Paul Curtis was kept under guard in a barn with other American prisoners; his diary records his travel in open trucks in the frigid winter weather, eating soup filled with bugs, the perpetual battle to control lice, and the interrogations by German officers; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Curtis and the other prisoners kept up their spirits by thoughts of home, candy stores, and the fine meals that they would eat upon their return; these morale building fantasies were important as they were forced marched by their captors as the battered German army retreated before the advancing allied forces; and

WHEREAS, on April 29, 1945 Paul Curtis arose and walked outside the barn where he and his fellow prisoners were confined; in the morning light while the others were still asleep, he saw an American soldier carrying a rifle approaching from the street; and

WHEREAS, the jubilant Americans, prisoners no more, caught a ride on a wagon to the closest town; when they rejoined American forces they were urged to write home to inform their families of their safety and freedom; and

WHEREAS, although Paul Curtis wrote his letter, he did not mail it, assuming that he would reach home before the letter did; fortunately, a buddy saw the discarded letter and mailed it, providing Mr. Curtis' family with the good news before his arrival; and

WHEREAS, for many years the reticence and modesty of Mr. Curtis, has to a great degree, masked an inspiring story of courage and faith in the face of danger, physical abuse, and deprivation which he and many others of his generation endured during the war; and

WHEREAS, it is appropriate that this legislative body join with the people of the community of Commerce and of Wilson County in honoring the valor of Paul Curtis and other American veterans of all this nation's wars; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we hereby honor Mr. Paul Curtis for his courage and perseverance as an American soldier and as a prisoner of war during World War II, thanking him for his dutiful service, and extending to him our best wishes for every success and fulfillment in the future.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted.